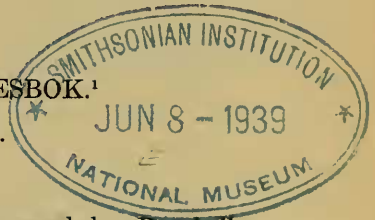


PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

THE NAME OF THE BLESBOK.<sup>1</sup>

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The name [*Antilope*] *albifrons* was proposed by Burchell (Travels Interior Southern Africa, vol. 2, p. 335, 1824) in the following words:

"The *Blesbok* is so called, from having a white mark on its forehead, similar to that which, in horses, is termed, in Dutch, a *bles*, and by English horsemen a *star*, or *blaze*. Late systematic writers have applied to the *Blesbok* the name of *Pygarga* (White-rump), which, by earlier authors, was intended for the *Springbok*: and as this name becomes absurd and contradictory when thus used, I have taken the liberty of substituting in its place, that of *albifrons*."

Like other early writers on South African mammals, Burchell did not distinguish between the Bontebok and the Blesbok, and it is obvious that he proposed *albifrons* merely as a substitute name for *Antilope pygarga* Pallas (1767) (modified to *A. pygarga* by Pallas in 1777). He makes this still clearer in the following passage from a later work (List Quadrupeds Brought by Mr. Burchell from Southern Africa 1817, p. 5, 1836?):

"*Antilope Pygarga*. (1.) *Antilope albifrons* of 'Trav.' vol. ii. p. 335. The *Blesbok* of the Colonists, and sometimes *Bontebok*. Shot near Swellendam, on the 17th January, 1815, and the species is now become very scarce."

An apparent remnant of the above-mentioned specimen, which may be regarded as the type of *albifrons*, is listed by Lydekker and Blaine (Cat. Ungulate Mammals Brit. Mus., vol. 2, p. 35, 1914) among the specimens of *Damaliscus pygargus*, as follows: "644, a. Single horn. Swellendam (?), Cape Colony; collected 17/1/1815. Presented by Dr. W. J. Burchell about 1817."

<sup>1</sup> The present communication is a by-product of an investigation of extinct and vanishing mammals, which has been sponsored by the American Committee for International Wild Life Protection and supported in part by a grant from the Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society.

The explanation given by Selater and Thomas (Book of Antelopes, vol. 1, p. 80, 1895) for their acceptance of the name *albifrons* is not at all satisfactory. The locality indicated by Burchell—Swellendam—was inhabited only by the Bontebok, and not by the Blesbok (cf. Selous, in Bryden, Great and Small Game of Africa, pp. 175–177, 1899; W. L. Selater, Mammals South Africa, vol. 1, p. 143, 1900; Selous, The Gun at Home and Abroad, the Big Game of Africa & Europe, pp. 83–84, 1914). Thus Burchell's name *albifrons* never did apply to any species but the Bontebok, and it must be discarded as a synonym of *Antelope pygargus* Pallas, which is currently placed in the genus *Damaliscus*.

Accordingly I propose for the Blesbok the name of

***Damaliscus phillipsi*, sp. nov.**

*Type*.—No. 35443, Museum of Comparative Zoölogy; adult male, skin and skull (most of palate and left maxilla, and part of left mandible, lacking); Orange Free State; collected July 23, 1935, by P. Andreka; collector's no. 1958d.

*Characters*.—Very similar to *Damaliscus pygargus* (Pallas), but of a generally lighter color and without the prominent white rump-patch of the latter.

*Description of type*.—Face blaze extending from eyes to nostrils, two-thirds as wide as long, Cream Color,<sup>2</sup> with a Y-shaped mark, not sharply defined, of Cinnamon-Buff in the middle; a narrower, buffy white median stripe extending from the forehead, between the horns, to the occiput; a narrow (15-mm.) band of Chestnut at the level of the eyes separating the two light areas; rest of head and neck mainly Chestnut, with admixture of some whitish hairs, especially about the lips, eyes, and base of ears; color gradually changing on median dorsal area of neck to Sayal Brown; ears turned inside out in the tanned skin and not available for description; a broad median dorsal area of Rood's Brown extending from shoulders to rump, and gradually changing on sides to Vandyke Brown; a triangular rump-patch Auburn, with a narrow posterior border of white; tail black, with a few scattered white hairs; extreme base of tail Light Buff; under parts light Chestnut anteriorly, white posteriorly; legs mainly Sepia; a broad stripe of buffy white commencing on anterior side of foreleg above the knee and extending down inner side of lower leg to the hoofs; a similar stripe passing down front of thigh and inner side of hind leg below the hock to the pastern; a narrow strip of Ochraceous-Tawny hairs in the cleft above the front hoofs. Head and body, 1480 mm.; tail, 260; hind foot, 420; ear, 170; height at shoulder, 1020.

Skull extremely similar in size and proportions to that of *Damaliscus pygargus*; basilar length from tip of premaxilla to inferior lip of foramen magnum, 287; zygomatic width, 123; interorbital width, 78; greatest length of nasals, 132; maxillary tooth-row at alveolar border, 82. Teeth little worn.

<sup>2</sup> Capitalized names of colors according to Ridgway's Color Standards and Color Nomenclature (1912).

Horns averaging a little longer and stouter than in *D. pygargus*; longitudinal axes of basal parts of horns lying in a plane parallel to that of the upper surface of the frontals, whereas in *D. pygargus* they are inclined forward at a slight angle from this plane; horns diverging and also curving slightly backwards for about two-thirds of the length, then converging and curving slightly upwards to the tips; basal two-thirds somewhat compressed, with 13 more or less complete rings (most of them very prominent, especially anteriorly); apical third rounded; horns blackish, rings pale anteriorly. Length of horns along front curve, 385 (right) and 394 (left); basal circumference, 166 (right) and 165 (left); distance between tips, 204.

*Remarks.*—An adult female from Orange Free State (No. 35444, Mus. Comp. Zoöl.) is generally similar to the type male, but not quite so richly colored; face blaze buffy white, continuous with a stripe of the same color on forehead and crown<sup>3</sup>; ears covered with buffy white hairs, very short on external surface; triangular rump-patch Sayal Brown, with a narrow posterior border of white; under parts white, with a light Chestnut band across the chest and a narrow border of the same color on the lower flanks. Head and body, 1480; tail, 220; hind foot, 410; ear, 160; height at shoulder, 980. Length of horns along front curve, 308 (right) and 298 (left); basal circumference, 125 (right) and 120 (left); distance between tips, 147. Teeth somewhat worn.

In days long past the Blesbok "was an inhabitant of the plains to the south of the Orange River in the eastern part of the Cape Colony, and of all the open country to the north of that river in the territories now known as the Orange River Colony, the Transvaal and Bechuanaland" (Selous, *op. cit.*, p. 84).

The Blesbok is now extinct in the wild state, but some thousands of individuals are preserved on farms in Orange Free State and the Transvaal as well as in the Somerville Reserve in the former state. There is also a small herd in the Giant's Castle Game Reserve in Natal.

The species is named in memory of Dr. John C. Phillips, and in recognition of his efforts to conserve the dwindling mammalian faunas of the world for the benefit of posterity as well as of our own generation.

*Specimens examined.*—Besides the two specimens described above, the following material in the collection of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia has been examined: a mounted head, a skull, and a set of horns purchased in Kimberley, Cape Province; a mounted head and a set of horns from "South Africa"; and two skins and skulls from the Zoological Society of Philadelphia.

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<sup>3</sup> The continuity of these two whitish areas appears to be somewhat exceptional. Selous remarks (*op. cit.*, p. 84) that as a rule they "are separated by a band of brown of varying width."